

Clarion

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*“Every
Christian has
burdens to
carry.”*



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Are we *Canadian Reformed*?

The name Canadian Reformed indicates that, from the very beginning, there was a desire to be seen as part of the Canadian scene

Sixtieth anniversary

On April 16, 1950, a group of Dutch immigrants instituted the first Canadian Reformed congregation in Southern Alberta,¹ making this the sixtieth anniversary of our churches in Canada. It is interesting to note that this first congregation initially chose the name "Free Reformed Church." Within a few months, however, it was decided to take the name "Canadian Reformed Church."² Considering that for many years church life would still for the most part be conducted in the Dutch language, this was a bold statement. This name indicates that, from the very beginning, there was a desire to be seen as part of the Canadian scene.

In the year that we mark sixty years as a federation of churches, it is good to ask ourselves how this visionary name has worked out. In other words, have we truly become a *Canadian Reformed Church*? Have we truly integrated into the Canadian setting?

The Dutch church

Despite the name, and the vision in that name, it seems to me we are not as far as we might think we are. I recall from my teenage years, at a time when the Canadian Reformed Churches marked twenty five years in Canada (i.e., around 1975), that despite our categories of "true and false church," others simply referred to us as a "Dutch church." Due to the proximity of most Canadian Reformed Churches to Christian Reformed Churches (CRC), it may have been necessary to explain the difference, but these differences tended to be beyond the comprehension of the listeners. In the popular mindset, Christian or Canadian Reformed made no difference. Both were "Dutch churches." This past Christmas, I accompanied some young people on an evening of caroling in a local nursing home where it

became apparent from the appreciative audience that after sixty years we were still seen as a Dutch church. I was even called upon to give a brief explanation as to how our church differed from the CRC, but in the end the person who asked indicated his general appreciation for Dutch, Reformed people, regardless of which particular church they belonged to.

The situation does not change when we move from the anecdotal to written sources. Due to the small size of the Canadian Reformed Churches (approximately 0.05% of the population), it is hard to find it mentioned. One will find more references to the Christian Reformed Churches, as they are numerically about five times the size of the Canadian Reformed Churches (approximately 0.27% of the population). The Reformed churches fall into the category of ethnic churches. Reformed churches are seen as Dutch churches. In terms of placing them theologically, they are seen as conservative Protestant churches.

Part of the immigration experience

Regardless of how we may see ourselves, and how we may wish others to see us, there is the reality that, after sixty years, even with the name *Canadian Reformed*, we are still perceived as an ethnic church. From a theological perspective, we may lament this ethnic association. I must admit that for many years I bristled at being seen as belonging to "that Dutch church." In the end, however, we should have expected no less in light of the immigration experience. As we live with hyphenated Canadians, we live, even if only in people's minds, as hyphenated churches. In the Canadian context, any church with "Reformed" in its name is going to be associated with being Dutch, just as much as the name "Anglican" is associated with being English, the name "Presbyterian" with being



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Scottish, the name "Lutheran" with people of German or Scandinavian origin, and being "Roman Catholic" especially with people from Italy, Ireland, or France. The ethnic character of Canadian Reformed Churches after sixty years is confirmed by a look at the names on the address list of any Canadian Reformed Church as well as by Canadian Reformed culture as manifested in our family customs.

While we may see ourselves as unique, the reality is that it has been a feature of immigration that people held on to their religious convictions. One author, writing about the efforts to integrate immigrants from Eastern Europe into English speaking churches at the beginning of the 1900s, stated, "Religious leaders were dismayed and surprised to discover that people's religious choices were often guided as much by familiarity with traditions and trappings as by theological inquiry into the choices presented to them."³ In all the changes and upheaval of immigration, one's faith, including its particular expression, was a constant that gave an anchor in the sea of change. To this day, a look at the types of churches in an area will tell you a great deal about the country of origin of the original settlers.

The point that comes out in this is how our experience as Canadian Reformed Churches in being identified with our country of origin is part of a broader experience of any immigrant group. It takes many years to become fully integrated into one's new country. Economic and social integration probably are easier than religious integration, especially when one works with the categories of true and false church.

Learning from the experience of others

Since our experience as Canadian Reformed Churches is not unique, it can be helpful to look at others and see how they have experienced the process of integration. When we look at others, it will be noticed that the process toward finding one's place is bound to arouse tension. There will be tension between those who wish to hold on to the past and those who wish to move forward. George Webster Grant, in his book, *The Church in the Canadian Era*, suggests that this tension exists in churches everywhere but "it has usually been most acute in immigrant societies, where choices constantly have to be made between the preservation of ancestral patterns and the formulation of new ones."⁴

Helpful as a point of comparison are the developments in the Christian Reformed Church. Harry Groenewold, in an essay entitled, "The Christian

Reformed Church in Canada,”⁵ analyzes the trends in the CRCs up till 1990. He writes of those who feared any change would lead to liberalism. He summed up the responses as being either an otherworldly spirituality or a North American Style of fundamentalism. The latter, he described in terms of a belief that “an uncritical adherence to the creedal heritage will guarantee that the inherited orthodoxy will be preserved.” In his opinion, “these staunch defenders of the faith reduced the vitality of the Reformed vision to a deadening theological orthodoxy of creed and doctrine.”⁶

In recent years, as churches we have made a significant move in coming to terms with our place in the North American religious scene

We can also describe the dangers in another way. The first is the discarding of the inheritance in terms of confession, liturgy, and practical piety. The opposite danger is an idolizing of the inheritance where the particular experience in the country of origin is made the norm for the church gathering work of Christ in the adopted country. The former at times can be detected in our midst in the attraction to evangelical styles of piety and worship. The latter can be detected in the Acts of Synods, especially in the area of relationships with church federations that do not have a common Dutch root. The immigrant setting not only evokes tensions but makes them more acute.

Sixty years young

When we look at ourselves as Canadian Reformed Churches after sixty years, we can see that we are still in the process of becoming a truly *Canadian* Reformed Church. While we may lament that we are still in process after sixty years, we do better to recognize that becoming a truly *Canadian* Reformed Church takes time. By comparison, the Christian Reformed Church in the US has been in existence over one hundred and fifty years and its Dutch roots are still obvious. Rather than deny it, we do better to acknowledge the reality of our cultural environment. As previously stated, in a country of hyphenated Canadians, we have hyphenated churches.

All this may sound like an acceptance of what has been labeled the “pluriformity of the church,” but again, that is a term and concept that developed in a different country and religious setting. In recent years,

as churches we have made a significant move in coming to terms with our place in the North American religious scene, not only by entering into ecclesiastical fellowship with churches like the OPC and the RCUS but also by joining an organization like NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). At first glance that looks like capitulation to pluriformity thinking but, at bottom, it is a recognition of being a church founded by immigrants in a continent filled with immigrants coming from a wide variety of tribes and nations who have taken their church life with them to the new world.

In conclusion, one more quote from Groenewold’s article is helpful. He concluded by writing, “[The CRCs] present difficulties and internal dissensions are an important part of the process of religious integration into the Canadian setting, and the need to formulate an identity and place alongside other Canadian denominations without sacrificing its legacy or surrendering its understanding of how the Christian relates to the surrounding culture.”⁷ Thankfully, while we have lively discussions in our midst, I don’t think we need to speak of dissention. The point is, however, that the challenges we face are part of the process of integration, of becoming a *Canadian* Reformed Church. In that process, sixty years is really only a short time. With a view to becoming more *Canadian*, we do well to be aware of this process and work with it. We are what we are by the providence of God. By seeing who we are, and where we fit in, we can also be better instruments of God in our adopted home and native land.

¹ This was not the beginning of Reformed church life in Canada. There had been Christian Reformed Churches since the early 1900s. There is evidence of Reformed churches made up of settlers that moved from New York State being established in the early 1800s in the area around Kingston, Ontario. These churches eventually were absorbed into the Presbyterian Church. The mention of Presbyterian churches, of course, reminds us that there has been a Reformed presence in Canada from the very beginning of settlement.

² See, W.W.J. VanOene, *Inheritance Preserved*, (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, Revised Edition, 1991), 75, 76.

³ See, G.A. Rawlyk (ed), *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760-1990* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 131.

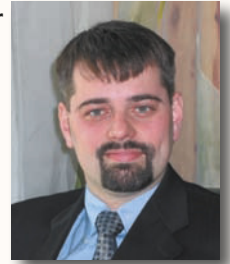
⁴ George Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Vancouver: Regent Publishing, 1998), 207.

⁵ In Robert E. VanderVennen (ed), *Church and Canadian Culture* (Lanham; New York; London: University Press of America, 1991), 177-191.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 189,190.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.





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MATTHEW 13:52

Sacrificial Love Proves Genuine Faith (Part 2 of 3)

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
Galatians 6:2

We all have burdens to carry. The burdens that God has given you to carry may be of a different size or shape or kind than He has given to someone else. But every Christian has burdens to carry.

Some suffer the burden of temptation and the consequences of a moral lapse or spiritual fall. Others are faced with a serious physical ailment, mental disorder, or handicap. Then there are those whose lives are weighed down with a broken marriage or family, lack of employment, or the permanent consequences resulting from abuse. You could surely add to this list of burdens.

But Jesus came into this world to bear our burdens – all of them. He took our heaviest burden, the one under which we would have been utterly crushed, and He put it upon Himself. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2:24).

He continually calls out to everyone who is loaded down by their burdens: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt 11:28-30).

You understand why the Lord Jesus was often so angry with the Pharisees. Remember what He said to them: “Woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them” (Luke 11:46).

What we do with other people’s burdens then, has eternal significance. Either we come to Jesus, who has lifted the burden of sin from us, and we start helping others with their burdens or we let other people suffer under their burdens, and thus indicate that we actually don’t know Christ at all, in spite of what we may confess.

I fear that sometimes we think and act as if true piety and true religion consists in letting others carry *their* own burdens. Especially when, in our opinion, they are carrying a burden of their own making. We might even think that because someone deserves the burden they’re carrying, they absolutely should not have our help to carry it. But when we think and act along these lines, are we really any different from the Pharisees who loaded people down with burdens that were impossible to carry?

Let us remember then, that Jesus lifted the burden from us, as



Illustration by Sheila Van Delft

undeserving as we all are. He lifted our burden through his death on the cross: “Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isa 53:4).

There is no better place to learn the law of sacrificial love than at the foot of the cross. There is no better person from whom to learn this law than from Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. And there’s no better way to display pure religion than to carry each other’s burdens – the undeserving helping the undeserving – for in this way we will fulfill the law of Christ.





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Being a Church Kid: Positives and Negatives (Part 1 of 2)

This article was originally a speech for the May Long Weekend organized by the Fraser Valley Young Peoples' League of the Canadian Reformed Churches in BC, held on Sunday, May 17, 2009.

"My Story?"

Many of you know that I travel often to a certain country in the Far East in order to teach, counsel, and encourage the believers there. When I go there I am often asked about "my story." You may ask "what is that?" What they want to know is how I came to faith. How did I become a Christian? In most cases what they are looking for is some spectacular story about how the Lord converted me in a very dramatic way. Now, whether for good or bad, I do not have a dramatic story to tell them. I inform them that if they want to hear a dramatic story, they should speak with Pastor D – now, he has a real story to tell! (Have you ever heard it? If not, you should invite him to tell it. It will amaze you, make you cry, and lead you to praise God.) But as for me, my story is almost dull by comparison. Why is my story on the dull side? Because I'm a church kid.

Now maybe I need to explain that expression "church kid." Commonly we describe those who belong to the church as "members, communicant members, non-communicant members, baptized members, believers, Christians, Reformed believers" and we describe those who are younger and are being raised in the Christian church as "covenant children."

So most of you I suspect are what would be called "covenant kids" or "church kids." You were born into a Christian family, raised in a Christian home, attend the Christian church, are being taught by a Christian minister, and either go to Christian schools or are home-schooled by Christian parents.

Coming to the Lord

What this means too is that for most of you it is hard, if not impossible, to say to someone else, "On

this day, at that time, in that place, I was converted and came to know the Lord." Ever since you were knee high to a grasshopper, you have been hearing about the Lord. Your parents taught you to pray – "Now I lay me down to sleep," read you Bible stories, talked to you about the Lord. In other words, the Lord has always been there.

Now, of course I realize that the Lord may not always have been there is the same way for you. Perhaps when you were young you spoke often to Him and listened to Bible stories with glee. Perhaps as you got older the fascination began to wane. Maybe some of you even wandered away from the Lord for a time, or else you felt hardly connected to Him. Living with Him, after all, does have it ups and downs. Why it could even be that some of you here have still not really re-connected to Him. You fold your hands and close your eyes at mealtimes with the family because it's expected of you. You go to worship not because you are spiritually hungry but because if you don't, you may get booted out of the house. You attend a Christian school because your parents make you. In short, there are times when some of you really do not care and simply go through the motions.

Now, be that as it may, the thing that I want to say with this is that for most of you the Lord is no stranger, the Bible is no foreign book, a worship service is no alien experience. Unless you have really fallen off the church wagon and climbed back on again, you have no dramatic story to tell. You are a church kid.

Back to the . . .

Now, getting back to the believers in that foreign country mentioned earlier. It should be said that they do not frown down on this or yawn when told this. No, also this keenly interests them. To be raised and nurtured in a Christian home, to be part of a family that may have been Christian for generations, all of that astounds them.

Even more than that, it makes them jealous. Yes, the believers in that other country by and large are really jealous of you. They wish that they could have what you have. Oh, to have Christian parents instead of unbelieving ones. Oh, to be nurtured in a home where Christian values reign. Oh, to be able to go to church every Sunday freely and openly, to hear sermons by trained ministers, to have buildings where there is heat and light. Oh, to be able to attend a Christian school where Christ stands in the centre. All of these things, and more, are seen by them as a huge, unimaginable dream. It's what they would love to have, but do not have.

So, besides all of these things, what do you have as church kids? What are the positives of being a church kid? What are the specific advantages?

A covenant kid

The first thing I would say is that as a church kid you are also a covenant kid. The covenant, this wonderful relationship of promise and demand, envelops your life. What this means is that the God of the covenant has called you into existence. He has given you your life. He has given you his great and blessed promises. He has numbered your days. He has a book in which all of your days are written down, so to speak. Believe it or not, He had this book for you already before you were born (see Psalm 139).

Yes, and then once you are born, this God steps forward at your baptism and puts his seal of ownership on you. He claims you as his own. He gives you his Name. He has you baptized into his Name – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – the one, great Triune God. Make no mistake about it, you are his.

So, contrary to what some say, you are not a Christian-in-waiting. You are not a child about whom your parents make promises to God, while God Himself is silent and waiting on the sidelines to see what you will do as you grow up. Our God is not standing casually by watching you mature. Nor is He waiting for you to take the first step, finally make up your mind and choose for Him. No, you are not a Christian-in-waiting and He is not a God-in-waiting.

Before birth, at birth, and after birth, He is intimately involved with your life. He is involved by means of instruments: believing parents, grandparents and family, fellow believers, elders and ministers, teachers, a church community. He is involved through

his Word and what it reveals and teaches. Above all, He is involved through the Holy Spirit.

For when you do come to see and believe, even when this happens gradually, do you think that this is your work, your doing, your deed? No, it is the Holy Spirit who is working in you and through you. For does Scripture itself not tell us that no one can say that Jesus is Lord, "except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3)?

Hence the first great positive of being a church kid is that this means that you have been raised in the context of covenant.

Christian parents

The second big plus of being a church kid is that God has given you Christian parents. He did not entrust your young life to indifferent, careless, immoral, unprincipled people. No, He placed you in the arms of parents who confess to be believers.

In turn those parents received you with joy, loved you, and still love you. They do their best to teach you to pray, to listen to Bible stories, and also to sing psalms and hymns, to act in a manner fitting your status as a child of God.

In addition your parents have sent or are sending most of you to a Christian school. Do you realize what a blessing that is? When believers in China hear about your schooling their jaws drop and they sigh, "Oh, if only we had the freedom to do this and the means to make this happen." What a privilege this is!

The Lord has always been there

I hope that all of you see this as well. Being educated in a Christian school is a huge benefit. It is both a positive and a negative benefit. It is a positive benefit because in such a setting you can freely relate all things to the Lord and Saviour of all things. It is a positive benefit because there you share a common confession, common values, and common goals. In addition, there is also negative benefit in that you are being taught in a setting that opposes the world's fascination and involvement with drugs, sex, gangs, and alcohol.

Now, in saying this I know that our Christian schools are not perfect. Some of you, as well as some of your peers, are still acting out or acting silly. As well, some of you can be snooty, selfish, and superior. You

only let certain people into your group. You don't go out of your way to embrace and befriend the new kid, unless he's cool. Peer pressure, bullying, cliquishness, as well as other forms of worldly behaviour happen, but these things do not represent the norm, the aim, or the standard of any of our Christian schools. They strive for better things and they urge you to get with the program and do the same thing.

So our schools are not perfect and neither are your parents. I am sure all of you are parental critics in one form or another. There are things that your mother does that bug you. There are things that your father does or does not do that irk you. Patience, calmness, wisdom, understanding, time, and help are often in short supply.

You know when I was growing up I too was a parent critic. Indeed, to this day I can still give you a long list of their faults and failures. But do you know what? Today I'm both a parent and a grandparent and in spite of being critical of my parents at one time, I'm no better. And neither will any of you be. I guarantee you that each and every one of you will parent your children, if God pleases to give them to you, with the same imperfection as I did and as your parents do.

One of the advantages of being a pastor in one congregation for a long time is that you get to see people grow. I see babies become toddlers, toddlers become children, then teenagers, finally adults. I also see some grow up smoothly, while others struggle with growing up. In any case, whenever I see a young person make life miserable for his or her parents, I know one thing. Payback time is coming! And sure enough it comes, for when that former kid has kids, guess what? He often gets back a taste of his own medicine.

Yet be that as it may, getting back to your parents, the best thing that I can say to you is love them, warts and all. Listen to them. Heed their instruction. Be patient with their weaknesses and shortcomings (à la the Catechism – LD 39). Your time will come.

Church

So the pluses thus far of being a church kid have to do with covenant and parents, but there is a third one and it has to do with church. Almost all of you are either members of a Canadian Reformed or a United Reformed church. In other words, you are members of a church that is rooted in the Bible as the inspired, infallible Word of God, that has adopted creeds and confessions that are ecumenical, faithful, and effective

instruments, that upholds the office of all believers and the special offices of deacon, elder, and minister, that insists on clear, faithful, applicable preaching of the Word, that strives for unity, holiness, and fellowship among its members, that takes seriously the call to bring the gospel to the nations. In short, also with respect to the church you are privileged and blessed.

Again, it sometimes takes a foreign perspective to appreciate this. Just last week I met with a delegation of pastors and elders who came here specifically from Korea to learn how the Canadian Reformed Churches function and regulate their church life.

Our God is not standing casually by watching you mature

When they first came to me with this request I was somewhat taken aback and even uneasy. After all, you all know what church life is like on the outside, so to speak. On the other hand, I know what it is like on both the outside *and* the inside. And sometimes especially the inside is not pretty. We may believe and confess in all humility and by God's grace that we are a true church of Jesus Christ, but we are far from being a perfect church of our Lord. Every day we need his blood to cover our sins, as well as his forgiveness and his grace. On top of that we need daily infusions and fillings of the Holy Spirit. We are, as Prof. K. Schilder used to say, very much a church "under construction."

Nevertheless, in spite of all that, there is a lot for you and me to be thankful for. This year I hope to celebrate thirty-seven years of active ministry in the Canadian Reformed Churches, and let me tell you that I would not have wanted to have celebrated those years anywhere else. In spite of our weaknesses as churches, in spite of our hang-ups and in spite of our idiosyncrasies, I would not want to serve anywhere else. I love our churches! I love her doctrines. I love her worship. I love her people. And I hope that in you too there is a real love for the church of which you are a member. Pray for her. Worship with her. Work in her. Thank God for her.

So you and I are all church kids, kids who can rejoice in God's covenant, in our parents and in our church. Count your blessings!





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Lutheranism and the Lord's Supper: Reflections on Lord's Day 18

As I was recently preparing for a sermon dealing with Lord's Day 18, I had the opportunity to explore again the background to Questions and Answers 47 and 48. As you may know, the Heidelberg Catechism was written in Germany and first published in 1563. It is unusual: a Reformed catechism emerging from a predominantly Lutheran context. Some of the substantial disagreements between the Lutherans and the Reformed are discernible in the Catechism and Lord's Day 18 is one of the most notable places – after all, we have here four questions and answers on the ascension. Compare that with one question and answer on the resurrection in Lord's Day 17. There was obviously something going on in the historical background that made extra attention on this point necessary.

The ubiquitarian error versus the Calvinist heresy

If you've been around the block a few times, you've heard plenty of catechism sermons on Lord's Day 18. Likely you've heard that this issue goes back to the Lord's Supper. Indeed, it does. But more fundamentally, it goes to the issue of where Christ's human nature can be found today. It is an issue of Christology (the doctrine of Christ). In fact, this is one of the most significant questions in Christology.

The Lutherans were historically known as ubiquitarians – they held that Christ's human nature is ubiquitous, which means that it is present everywhere. The Reformed were historically known as sacramentarians – they held that Christ's human nature is only in heaven, but he is *spiritually present* at the Lord's Supper on earth. The Reformed spoke of the

"ubiquitarian error." The Lutherans returned the favour and even did one better, referring to the Reformed position as "the Calvinist heresy."

Many commentators and preachers of the Catechism have said that the Lutherans held to this error in order to shore up their doctrine of consubstantiation. So, for instance, J. Van Bruggen in his *Annotations to the Heidelberg Catechism* wrote that the Lutheran teaching is to be rejected because "it leads to a misconception of the Lord's Supper in the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation, i.e. that Christ is *bodily* present in, with, and under the symbols of the Lord's Supper" (131).

Richard Muller is a well-known historical theologian at Calvin Seminary. He's written many helpful books in his field. Among them is his *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*. In his article on *consubstantatio*, Muller notes that this was a doctrine of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper that dates back to the Middle Ages. It was taught as a possibility by Duns Scotus, John of Jandun, and William of Occam. Says Muller, "According to the theory of consubstantiation, the body and blood of Christ become substantially present together with the substance of the bread and wine, when the elements are consecrated" (80). He says that this is not to be confused with the Lutheran doctrine of the real presence of Christ's human nature in the Lord's Supper. The medieval doctrine of consubstantiation proposed that Christ is present locally. In other words, you could draw a line around the bread and say that Christ was right there. You could spill some wine on the table, carefully draw a line around the puddle, and say that Christ was present right there in that very place.

However, the Lutheran doctrine of real presence says something different. There is a real presence, but it is illocal. "Illocal" is an unfamiliar word to us. Immaterial beings (such as angels) have an illocal presence. That means you cannot draw a line around the presence of an angel. Angels are present, but they cannot be limited to a certain spot. According to classical orthodox Lutheran theology, so it is with the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Christ is there in his human nature, but not in such a way that you can pin Him down to a certain spot – He has a real, illocal presence. It should also be noted that the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is different from his presence elsewhere in the world. It is a presence "specific to the sacrament. . . bound to a particular promise of God given in the words of institution." In the Lord's Supper, He is present "definitively and sacramentally" (Muller, 242).

Can you make this simple for me?

As I was reading this, I began to think about the poor Lutheran pastor who has to somehow teach this to his flock. It sounds quite complicated. How would he do it? To answer that question, I turned to *Concordia: the Lutheran Confessions, a Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*. This volume was published by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS), one of the two more conservative and confessional Lutheran churches in North America (the other being the Wisconsin Synod). If you want to understand the Reformed churches, you would turn to the Three Forms of Unity. If you want to understand Lutheranism, a good place to turn is the Book of Concord.

He is present in Word and Spirit to bless us

The first thing to note is that this is a large book of over 700 pages and in those pages you will search in vain for even one mention of the word "consubstantiation." "Transubstantiation" (the Roman Catholic view) is there and critiqued, but no where do we read something like, "Lutherans hold to a doctrine of consubstantiation." Rather, they describe their position as "sacramental union" (470).

Church News

Examined by Classis Central Ontario of June 11, 2010 and declared eligible for call:

Ryan Kampen

Examined by the Classis Ontario West of June 16, 2010 and received consent to speak an edifying word in the churches (C.O. Art. 21):

Student Justin Roukema

Examined by the Classis Ontario West of June 16, 2010 and declared eligible for call:

Tony Roukema, Tim Sikkema, and Arend Witten

Called by the American Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI:

Candidate Tony Roukema

Called by the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, Western Australia to serve as a missionary in Lae, Papua New Guinea:

Candidate Tim Sikkema

It is true that the Lutherans believe that Christ's human nature is present everywhere. In reference to the ascension, Martin Luther understood the words "at God's right hand" to mean everywhere (488) - God's right hand is his almighty, omnipresent power. So, when speaking about article 8 of the Formula of Concord, the editors of *Concordia* explain: "Does the human nature of Christ share in the divine attributes so that Christ, according to both natures is present everywhere, even under the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper? The biblical position, explained in this article, is clearly, Yes" (491). Likewise, elsewhere we read this: "Lutherans believe that the true body and blood of Jesus are actually present (under the bread and wine), distributed, and orally received in Holy Communion" (487).

Consubstantiation?

Whether that position can fairly be called consubstantiation is a matter of debate. When it comes to the root or etymology, consubstantiation simply means "with the substance." The human nature of Christ is "with the substance" of the bread and wine. So, from an etymological perspective, consubstantiation might be an appropriate description of the Lutheran view. However, if one digs deeper into

Lutheran theology, it becomes clear that there is only a superficial similarity with what has historically been termed "consubstantiation." It would be akin to calling Arminians "Reformed" because they hold to a doctrine of election. There are only superficial similarities between the Arminian and Reformed views of predestination, and similarly there are only superficial similarities between the Lutheran view of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper and the medieval doctrine of consubstantiation. Moreover, according to the Wikipedia entry on the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, "It is occasionally reported that the LCMS and other Lutherans teach the doctrine of consubstantiation. Consubstantiation is generally rejected by Lutherans and is explicitly rejected by the LCMS as an attempt to define the holy mystery of Christ's presence."

None of that takes away from the real and serious differences between the Lutherans and ourselves. It also does not take an iota away from what the Catechism says in Questions and Answers 47 and 48. There is a real and significant error being addressed there, one that continues to divide us. The Lutherans also continue to recognize the divide. In fact, the Epitome of the Formula of Concord rejects and condemns the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism. They reject and condemn the teaching that "Christ is present with us on earth in the Word, the Sacraments, and in all our troubles, only according to his divinity. This presence does not at all apply to his human nature" (494). That sounds like it is directed at our Catechism and given that this was written in the late 1570s, it is entirely possible.

Undoubtedly, some of this is quite detailed and complex. I have struggled to understand it myself for over ten years. What is important for us to know and believe is that Christ is in heaven with our human flesh. He is here on earth with his "divinity, majesty, grace and Spirit." Unlike the Lutherans, we don't believe that Christ's human nature is here on earth right now in any way. But unlike much of the broader Christian world (what used to be called "evangelicalism"), we also believe that Christ is really present when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. He is present in Word and Spirit to bless us. It is a sad thing that for over 400 years we haven't been able to agree

with the Lutherans on these points. May God quickly bring the day when we will at last find "concord" with them.



Lord's Day 18

47. Q. Is Christ, then, not with us until the end of the world, as He has promised us?
- A. Christ is true man and true God. With respect to His human nature He is no longer on earth, but with respect to His divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit He is never absent from us.
48. Q. But are the two natures in Christ not separated from each other if His human nature is not present wherever His divinity is?
- A. Not at all, for His divinity has no limits and is present everywhere. So it must follow that His divinity is indeed beyond the human nature which He has taken on and nevertheless is within this human nature and remains personally united with it.



Mr. Keith Sikkema is principal of Dufferin Area Christian School in Orangeville, Ontario
ksikkema@istop.com

Like Grass

Psalm 103 is a deeply comforting song about God's everlasting love for those who fear Him, for those who know they are but dust, fragile, like fleeting flowers and grass. While at the beach, I ended up reflecting on being like grass and flowers. The point is the same.

Grass and flowers

Marram grass is a resilient species that thrives along sandy beaches and foredunes. Its waxy, hairy leaves handle drought well and they are rolled lengthwise to help reduce transpiration. When it rains, the leaves unroll, promoting photosynthesis and growth. The plant can easily handle shifting sands along the beach: It thrives on being covered with sand and quickly grows back to the surface. Its deep roots reach for groundwater and its long rhizomes help bind the sand together. As the grass grows in clumps, it also helps reduce wind speed at ground level and settle the sand. With sufficient fresh sand, wind, and waves, it helps form new dunes and a habitat for other plants and animals. Quite appropriately, its Latin genus name (*Ammophila*) means "sand lover."

The rare *Pitcher's thistle* does best in dry sandy conditions at beaches and open dunes around Michigan and it exists at only four locations in Canada. Its blue-green leaves extend out over the ground like a rosette and its stem reaches upward, helping both its tolerance for burial and its role in stabilizing sand. The plant's leaves are less prickly than most other thistles and white tailed deer like them. Its waxy leaf coverings, along with fine silvery hairs at the leaves' bottom, help it preserve water and handle intense sunlight. Its tap roots reach down as far as six feet. It takes up to eight years for a plant to produce pinkish-white flowers, which attract insects for nectar. Its seeds are carried some distance by the wind, and the plant dies after flowering and seed setting.

Reflection

Both marram grass and Pitcher's thistle have us stand in awe of our Creator. He made both plants for their own niche and purpose in the complex whole of creation. Like the lilies of the field, they, too, neither labour nor spin. They surpass Solomon in being dressed like this – and may be gone tomorrow (Matt 6:28-30). While marram grass is highly resilient, it remains fragile when abused: colonies can be destroyed by as few as ten footsteps. The fragility of this habitat has rendered Pitcher's thistle endangered, deeply affected as it is by recreational traffic, beach front development, introduction of exotic species, and low seed-setting. When either of these plants are destroyed, exposed sand may form blowouts, covering other vulnerable species and leaving the coastline open to more damage. The concern is also that the species may disappear with their genes and forever unknown benefits.

Some people take their battle for preservation of endangered species to an obsessive high. Considering our cultural mandate to take care of, to develop, and to rule over the earth, we do not worship the creature, but the Creator when we are careful with his creation. We recognize that the Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life, as the Nicene Creed has it, and that God renews the face of the earth by his Spirit. We have very good reasons to do even more than comply with posted signs not to take shortcuts through the dunes, and to reconsider the impact of our toys.

Unique

Like the plants, our children are all different. We notice that when we try to tell people apart: we recognize them by their differences. We don't observe that people have a nose, eyes, or ears – but will note that they have a flat, short, cute, tiny, freckled, or

crooked nose; we find that their eyes are blue, hazel, brown, grey, droopy, sparkling, or sad; and we observe that their ears are small or big. A botanist also will go out into the field and determine that a particular type of grass in the dunes is marram grass – or not. If we see a thistle, but it is not growing in or near the dunes, and the flowers are bluish, we know it is not Pitcher’s thistle. Some people are actually endowed with an uncanny gift of telling things or people apart based on minute differences.

~~~~~  
*In his wisdom*  
*He wove them all together*  
~~~~~

Marram grass and Pitcher’s thistle have in common that they hold the loose sand together, but they differ, for instance, in how well they attract insects. In a similar way, some of our children not only have an uncanny eye for detail, but also an incredible gift for remembering facts. It may be harder for them to see the connections between those details, or how they relate in terms of significance in real life, but this is their special gift. But then, there are some who cannot see the details but have a great eye for the big contours and the connections. Some are very social, have an incredible awareness of relationships between people, and know how to build friendships and show empathy – while others have no clue at all on that score. Some are musically gifted, while others, or sometimes the same, are great with math and logic. There are those who excel in the use and understanding of speech and language and who can express every single thought and emotion that stirs their souls. These are only some ways in which our children are different, and if we consider the number of combinations with these examples only, it runs in the hundreds of thousands. Yet, they were all made in God’s image, and in his wisdom He wove them all together.

Unique and integrated

Like marram grass and Pitcher’s thistle, children are unique. To describe them and their special characteristics, we clearly need a much wider range of adjectives than waxy, hairy, rolled-up, sand-loving, blue-green, pinkish-white, prickly, clumpy, vulnerable,

fragile, and resilient. After all, they were created in the image of God, well prepared and equipped for the task He had in store for them (See LD 3). We stand in awe of the marvelous and purposeful design of plants, but David praises God for having made him, David, wonderfully, for weaving him together, and for having all the days ordained for him written in his book (Ps 139). In Psalm 8, he sings of God having made man a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. In Deuteronomy 32, God’s children are referred to as the apple of his eye, and Psalm 17 picks up on this where it prays for his protection. Psalm 103:13 speaks tenderly of the father having compassion on his children as an example of how the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. The promises of the covenant are extended to them just as they are to their parents who believe. Indeed, the Lord is committed to provide all things for those who first seek his kingdom and his righteousness (Matt 6:33). Each of them is unique, but none of them is rejected for this uniqueness.

Our children are unique, every one of them, and recipients of God’s compassion. They all belong, as integral parts, to the covenant community. Paul speaks of that community as a body in which all have their part, and when one part is missing or not functioning as it should, all suffer. The integrity of the community is at stake, just like the absence of marram grass and Pitcher’s thistle stems and rhizomes will cause the sand to blow away. The Lord wants us and our children to be integrated members of the community. People were not meant to be alone, but rather live within the supportive context of the covenant community, where He gives us an excellent environment to take the children along in his service.

Unique and challenged

We do not always appreciate others for the unique way in which the Lord made them. In fact, we may give them a hard time for it. Bullies pick on a special feature and rub it in as though it ought not to be there. People take advantage of others’ weak spots and leave them scarred. Some are so scarred that they have a hard outer shell behind which to hide. In school, the program and its delivery may work well for most students, but rarely for all. Certain strengths students may have don’t seem to count in schools: they tend to focus on math,

logic, and language, at the exclusion of other gifts. Later on, students may find it difficult to discover the niche in which their unique strengths become assets. Uniqueness may bring out challenges associated with the thorns and thistles of Genesis 3:18 and the frustrations of Romans 8. People may even struggle to accept who they are and how the Lord made them.

People were not meant to be alone, but rather live within the supportive context of the covenant community

Life can be harsh, like it is for marram grass and Pitcher's thistle. Their resilience, and our children's, only extends so far before they succumb. It is interesting that the educational buzzwords of the last several years are about differentiation, learning styles, and multiple intelligences. The motto is that teachers ought to teach in such a way that all children will learn, no matter what their learning style, cultural background, traits, or special needs. Teachers must differentiate according to students' needs and abilities; they must acknowledge that children are smart in different ways; and they must prepare their lessons so that all will learn. There is much self-esteem worship there, but the notion of recognizing differences is laudable, and the call to teachers to work in the classroom with that given is good.

Differentiation is not easy, but progress is being made. It means work for teachers, for bullies, and for ourselves – and we should not count on being able to do this on our own. In Ontario, the Assistance for the Special Child (ASC) committee continues to draw attention to children with special needs and gifts and to equip parents and teachers with the tools they need. Everywhere, schools have implemented learning assistance or special education programs and teachers are learning to modify expectations within their classrooms. If students can grow roots and rhizomes with proper care and a supportive environment, each in their own way, they can flourish.

There is resilience, but also vulnerability. Being stepped on, being torn apart by dune buggies or bullies, or getting drowned out by floods of criticism

and ill-treatment don't bode well for these special plants or for these children. The Lord would have us give better consideration for others, by loving them like ourselves. He rebuked the disciples for hindering the children from coming to Him; neither should we create obstructions for these little ones. All children need protection, encouragement, and nurture to grow in maturity and independence.

Falling short

Adults reflect on their practice and realize that they fall short. There are times they hinder the little ones. Sometimes they lash out, or step on the tender plants in their fragile stages of growth, or uproot them – whether it be in a rage, on purpose, for “fun,” or inadvertently. At such times, they ought to bow their heads, ask for forgiveness, and repent. We all must turn to Christ and live a new life so the little ones, too, may live, and, in turn, may grow and be integrated in the community and do what they were created to do.

All children need protection, encouragement, and nurture to grow in maturity and independence

If we falter, we need not despair. Psalm 103 is not just about children, but also about grownups who continue to be in need of their father in heaven. He comes to us all with his mercy. He reminds us of that every time we hear his Word, every time we celebrate the sacraments. And as the children watch, may they realize that we are not going because we are so good. We go because He is compassionate and because we know we should be like that. We, too, are like grass and like flowers. We, too, receive that daily care which we need to live and thrive and survive. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us.



Ray of Sunshine

Corinne Gelms and
Patricia Gelms

*"The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.
The LORD is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made.
My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.
Psalm 145:8, 9, 21*



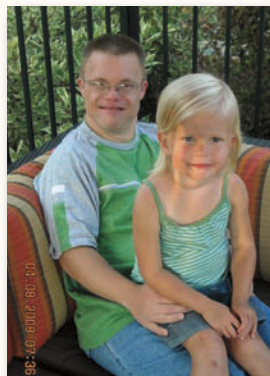
Terence Berends lives in the beautiful town of Fergus, where he is an enthusiastic member of the Lighthouse family. He is an entertaining presence in this home and his fellow residents appreciate his enthusiasm and zest for life.

Terence keeps busy and has become a familiar presence in town. He, along with the other members of the Lighthouse team, performs a janitorial service for the Maranatha and Emmanuel Schools. He also enjoys the time he spends sweeping up at Walinga or the time he spends at the "Op Shop" where he helps to sort through the inventory.

Terence is outgoing and personable and he uses his talents by readily meeting and greeting fellow members of his church family. He feels blessed to be a part of the Fergus church community and is a blessing to them as well. His positive attitude is certainly a contagious one. Terence is also a proud uncle of three nieces and two nephews. We are sure he will enjoy seeing his niece in the Fergus school hallways, now that she is in high school.

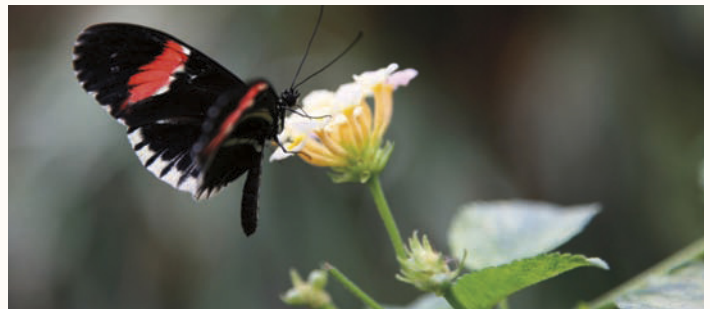
We hope you have a great birthday, Terence.

We pray that you may receive many more from the hand of the Lord. We wish a happy birthday to all who celebrate a birthday during the month of August. We congratulate you with another milestone in your life. Birthdays are a good time to reflect on the blessings that the Lord has given us and we certainly hope that you may feel blessed on your special day.



Birthdays in August

- 4 **TERENCE BERENDS** will be 34
6528 1st Line, RR3 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 5 **PHILIP SCHUURMAN** will be 51
1156 Diltz Road, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2
- 9 **ROSE MALDA** will be 53
Mt. Nemo Christian Nursing Home
RR 2, Milton, ON L9T 2X6
- 18 **FENNY KUIK** will be 58
140 Foch Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2C 5H7



A note to all parents and caregivers

If there are any address or other changes that we need to be aware of please let us know as soon as possible.

You can contact us by the following means:

Mail: Corinne Gelms
8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON LOR 2A0
Phone: 905-957-0380
Email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca





Attention: Christian Soldier

Brad Bredenhof

Before you begin the day, do you have your armour on? The devil, the world, and your own evil heart will attack you today! Are you prepared?

Checklist

- Have you girded your loins with truth? Are you sincerely prepared for battle? Be self-disciplined and devoted to victory.
- Is your breastplate of righteousness on? Jesus has given you complete righteousness, so live a life of holiness.
- Look at your feet – are they shod with the gospel of peace? Remember that God is at peace with you because of Christ and He is your strength, support, and Captain.
- Did you remember your shield of faith? Believe, trust, and have confidence in all God's promises.
- Put your helmet of salvation on, soldier! Be assured that your salvation is secured and victory is confirmed.
- Don't forget to take out the sword of the Spirit.
Fight with God's Word. Read your Bible and attack with it.
- Clothe your day in prayer. God is your help and courage.



The Forty-First Anniversary Meeting and the Thirty-Sixth Convocation of *The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary*

will be held, D.V., on

Friday, September 10, 2010 at 8:00 p.m.

at Redeemer University College

Program includes:

Dr. J. Van Vliet as featured speaker

Dr. J. Van Vliet and Dr. J. Smith installed as new professors

Six students graduating

Press Release of Classis Central Alberta, June 8, 2010

On behalf of the convening church of Calgary, Rev. J.P. Kalkman called the meeting to order. He asked that we sing Psalm 100:1-4 and read from Mark 6:6-13, 30-43. He led in prayer.

The church of Calgary examined the credentials. The churches were properly represented. There were two instructions.

Classis was then constituted. The following officers took their place: chairman: Rev. J.P. Kalkman; vice-chairman: Rev. M. Jagt; clerk: Rev. R. Aasman.

In his memorabilia, the chairman noted that in the last months Rev. J. Louwse has received two calls, which he declined. The call extended by the church of St. Albert to Rev. J. Van Woudenberg was also declined. The chairman wished the church of St. Albert the Lord's blessings. He also gave thanks the church of Coaldale celebrated their sixtieth anniversary and the church of Calgary celebrated their forty-fifth anniversary.

It was decided to allow Steve VandeVelde, who is currently taking the Pastoral Training Program in Coaldale, to observe classis when it enters into closed session.

The provisional agenda was adopted with some minor additions.

Classis received a report from the Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the ministry. Classis approved continued support for Br. Ted Van Spronsen.

The classical archives were inspected and found to be in good order.

Classis received a report on a good visit to the URCNA Classis of Western Canada January 14 and 15 2010. Greetings were given.

In closed session, Classis received reports on the church visitation of Barrhead and Neerlandia. Classis observed with joy the rich blessings of the Lord in the life of the churches.

Classis received a report on the churches' contact with the Provisional government. This mainly involves address updates and temporary marriage permits for out of province ministers officiating at weddings in Alberta.

Classis received a proposal from the church of Barrhead on video-conferencing. Classis decided to allow for this possibility in the future when there is a minimal agenda – and evaluate this afterwards.

The church of St. Albert requested pulpit supply. This was granted.

In closed session, advice was given on a matter of church discipline.

In accordance with Art. 44 C.O., the churches reported that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. There were no additional matters for which the churches needed help.

Classis dealt with two appeals. The first, on a matter of discipline, was granted. The second appeal objected to the singing of Augment Hymns in the worship service. This appeal was denied. Classis noted that Synod Smithers 2007 permitted the use of Augment Hymns in the worship.

The church of Coaldale was appointed to convene the next classis to be held on Thursday, September 23, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. The following officers were suggested: chairman: Rev. D. Poppe; vice-chairman: Rev. J.P. Kalkman; clerk: Rev. M. Jagt.

Question period was held.

The chairman deemed that censure as per Art. 34 C.O. was not necessary.

The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was approved for publication.

The chairman thanked the brothers for their good co-operation.

After the singing of Hymn 58:1, 2 he closed the meeting with prayer.

For classis,

M. Jagt, Vice-chairman, e.t. 